

Ready to Read

An Early Literacy Newsletter

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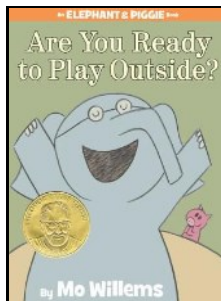
Volume 6, Issue 11
November 2013

Books and Reading: Asking Open-Ended Questions

Reading to young children should always be a dynamic experience. We should never expect them to sit quietly when we read aloud. To encourage meaningful interactions between books, ourselves and children, we must include them in the book sharing. Asking questions about a story or its illustrations is one way we can do this.

We can ask children two types of questions: close-ended and open-ended questions. Most close-ended questions require a right or wrong answer. Examples of close-ended questions are:

- What two animals do you see on the cover?
- Did the pig and elephant play in the rain?
- Is the pig angry? Why is she angry?
- How did the elephant save the day?



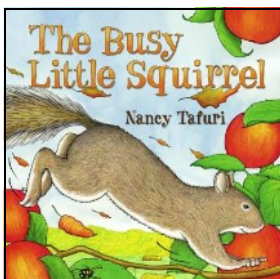
Open-ended questions do not have a right or wrong answer, and they often begin with *what*, *how*, *why* or *who*. These questions help you see how children think, stimulate their imaginations and invite conversation. Examples of general open-ended questions are:

- What do you think this story is about?
- What is happening in this picture?
- What do you think will happen next in the story?
- How did that happen?
- Why do you think he feels that way?

Most of us only ask children close-ended questions. However, we need to make an effort to ask more open-ended questions. Since open-ended questions encourage conversations, we can use these discussions to help children develop language and strong vocabularies; increase their background knowledge (what they know about the world); and encourage higher-level thinking.

The Library Can Help

Fairfax County Public Library has a wonderful selection of books that you can use to ask open-ended questions. Find these and many other stories at your neighborhood library branch!



The Busy Little Squirrel by Nancy Tafuri

Squirrel is too busy getting ready for winter to nibble a pumpkin with Mouse, run in the field with Dog or play with any of the other animals.

Suggested open-ended questions you could ask before, during or after the story:

What do you think squirrels do to get ready for winter?

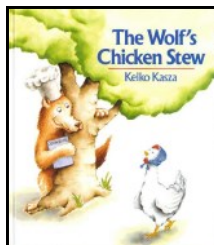
What do you do to get ready for winter?

How could you help feed the animals?

How do you keep busy?

("The Library Can Help" continued on page 2)

(“The Library Can Help” continued from page 1)



The Wolf's Chicken Stew by Keiko Kasza

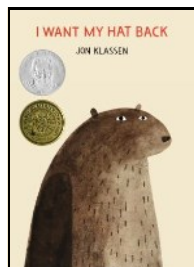
A hungry wolf tries to fatten up a hen for his delicious stew, but instead he makes new friends.

Suggested open-ended questions you could ask before, during or after the story:

Look at the cover. What do you think this story is going to be about?

Why do you think the wolf is holding a cookbook?

How do you think the wolf feels about being called “Uncle Wolf?” Why?



I Want My Hat Back by Jon Klassen

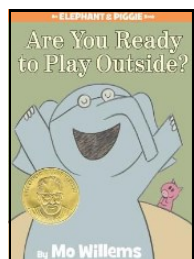
A bear almost gives up his search for his missing hat until he remembers that he saw a bunny wearing it.

Suggested open-ended questions you could ask before, during or after the story:

Have you ever lost something? How did it make you feel?

Did the bunny tell the truth? Why do you think he lied?

Since the bear can't find his hat, how do you think he feels? What should he do next?



Are You Ready to Play Outside? by Mo Willems

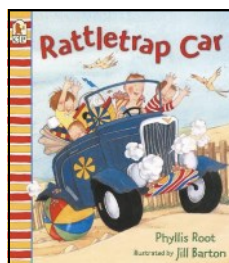
Friends Elephant and Piggie are playing outside when it starts to rain, and then they must decide what to do.

Suggested open-ended questions you could ask before, during or after the story:

What do you like to do when you are playing outside?

How could you play in the rain?

How can you make your friends feel better when they are sad?



Rattletrap Car by Phyllis Root

Disasters threaten to stop Poppa and the children from getting to the lake in their rattletrap car, but they manage to come up with an ingenious solution to each problem.

Suggested open-ended questions you could ask before, during or after the story:

Do you think they can make it to the lake in this rattletrap car? Why or why not?

How would you get to the lake or pool in a rattletrap car?

What is happening in this picture? How do you think the family feels since they made it to the lake?

Open-ended questions compiled by Susie Miller, Jane Gironde and Trinity Edwards, Early Literacy Assistants

When to Ask Open-Ended Questions

It is best to ask open-ended questions during the second reading of a story. When you read a book for the first time, focus on the story and ask brief questions that allow you to check for understanding. Reread the story or revisit certain parts or pictures and use this time to ask open-ended questions. Be sure to build in “wait time;” young children need a few seconds to think about and respond to questions.

